

Submission
No 881

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Birth trauma submission

My son was born in September 2021 at _____ hospital. What should have been one of the happiest times of my life, the birth of my first child has left permanent physical and mental scars.

During my pregnancy I was provided with the bare minimum of care. I was bullied by obstetricians and midwives about my gestational diabetes which I was diagnosed with at 14 weeks. I was admitted to the maternity ward on many occasions for monitoring and “help” for my GD. During these stays I was treated so poorly. During one stay I was put into an isolation room due to flu symptoms even though I had 2 negative covid tests. During that stay, due to the fact I couldn't leave the room the nurses delayed my medication including my insulin which meant I couldn't eat, when that was the whole point of me being admitted to the ward.

During another stay I had a midwife weigh me in the middle of the foyer purely because she was “curious” about how much I weighed as I had put quite a lot of weight on during pregnancy. There was no clinical reason for her to take my weight. I was constantly told that my baby would die if I didn't get the diabetes under control. But I was offered no support or education for my GD.

When I approached an OB about induction due to preeclampsia and GD which I had been admitted for until delivery, he asked why I wanted it. I stated that I was worried he was already so big at 36 weeks and I desperately wanted to avoid a C section and I was worried if he got any bigger I wouldn't be physically able to birth him vaginally. The OB told me that I was fat enough to birth a large baby. Last time I checked the size of a person doesn't dictate the size of their pelvis.

A induction date was set for 36+1. I had the Foley catheter placed at around 8pm. During this procedure the OB wanted to know why I wasn't vaccinated against Covid 19. I told her I didn't wish to be vaccinated while I was pregnant as we don't know the long term affects on babies yet. She then proceeded to give me a 30 min lecture about this. She also told me to just have an elective C section as my son was so big. I again refused as I desperately wanted to avoid surgery. She then laughed at me and told me to go for gold but he will be “coming out the sunroof”

The next day I had my waters broken and the induction drugs started. I cannot fault my labour midwife in any way. She respected my wishes and provided exceptional care. I had an epidural and the provider that gave me it was also great.

I was checked around 10pm and I was at about a 9cm with a cervical lip. My midwife told me to rest and she would check on me in 2 hours. At midnight she came to check and I was 10cm and ready to push. This was it, I was going to meet my son, or so I thought. She had an OB come in to check me and the OB advised me that I would be going for a c section. I was told my baby was in distress and we needed to deliver ASAP via c section. They told me that they were just going to go for dinner and then we would head up. I was told to sign a consent form incase I needed to receive blood products but no one explained what was wrong with my son or showed me any proof that he was in fact in distress.

I was taken to the operating theatre for my c section after the OB had their dinner. When we got up there, I couldn't work out was taking so long as they had told me my son was in danger I thought they would have been moving a bit faster. I also realised my sons dad had been left in a storeroom and wasn't brought in until I mentioned he was missing. They said they had forgotten he was in there waiting to be allowed in to the theatre. Eventually after expressing my concern, I was told that the OB wasn't sure how to approach the surgery so we needed to wait for an OB to come from home and he would be about 20 mins. When he arrived he was extremely rude to the staff, didn't even introduce himself to me or my sons dad and stated "there better be a good reason for calling me in" the OB that had called him told him "I don't know where to cut" as you can imagine that was terrifying to hear, I was basically paralysed from the chest down and had absolutely no control over what was happening to me and my baby. The male OB who was called in said "well you better hurry up and make a decision and start cutting" I felt so scared in that moment. I understand that the junior doctors need to learn but at 2am in the morning with my baby in distress it wasn't the time for a teaching exercise. Eventually my son was finally born at 2:06 am, with perfect (7) apgar scores which I find hard to believe that he was truly in distress with a perfect apgar score. I also believe that instead of having dinner, that if my baby truly was in danger and I was 10cm that I should have been encouraged to push. I had made it very very clear during my whole pregnancy that I didn't want a c section and I feel like the choice was taken away from me in the end, I should have been given options. I live with what ifs every day. What if I had just pushed? Would I be in the pain I'm in today? Would I have needed further surgery? Would I have needed to be separated from my baby?

Next thing I remember I woke up in recovery. I was taken back to the labour ward as there was no beds available on the maternity ward. I stayed in the labour ward till about 7am before being taken back to the maternity ward. My son was in the special care nursery to monitor his blood sugar levels. I was taken to see him on the way to the maternity ward. I couldn't even hold him. I had no skin to skin I could only reach out and touch him. There was no clinical reason the midwives couldn't have helped me have a few moments of skin to skin.

At around 10am a very rude midwife came to my room and told me to get up and shower. Less than 8 hours after having an emergency c section. I told her I was in a lot of pain and I would like to stay in bed a little longer. She told me if I wanted to see my son I was to get up and get in the shower as she wasn't going to help me go down to see him in a wheelchair and I must walk myself down there. I asked for some pain relief as I was in pain and really didn't want to get up just yet but I really wanted to see my son. She looked at me and stated "look at you, you are off your face, you don't need any pain relief, get up and get in the shower" my sons dad was left to help me in the shower. I stood in there in absolute agony with blood running down my legs while I cried hysterically from the pain and the way I was just spoken to. After I was finished I asked my sons dad to get a wheelchair to take me to see my son.

At 11pm that night my son was brought to my room. Again, I was offered no help or support. The nurse simply put him beside my bed and left. I was still struggling to move properly at this point. My pain was so bad once the spinal had fully worn off. Every time I requested pain relief I was meet with rudeness and many times denied pain relief. I was told there was no way my pain could be that bad and I was left to suffer. I was told that I was displaying drug seeking behaviour and I didn't need any pain relief. I'm absolutely disgusted with the way I was treated in regards to my pain. Due to my treatment I begged to be allowed to go home.

Due to the amount of blood I lost during surgery I needed to stay to be given a transfusion. I ended up staying 2 days in total post op. I begged to be discharged after the transfusion. I felt like I was safer at home than at the hospital.

I was discharged on Saturday, 2 days after my c section. Home visits were organised for the Sunday and Monday following discharge.

On the Sunday I refused to speak to the midwife that visited. I was so traumatised by my treatment in hospital I didn't want to speak to her. She checked out my son and cleared him and left.

When she returned on the Monday she could see I was clearly unwell and even unable to stand up and walk properly due to the pain.

She told me I needed to go back to the hospital. I refused as I was so scared to return there. We compromised and I went to my GP instead. After a consult with my GP and another doctor in the practice I was told I really needed to return to hospital. I really didn't want to go but I was told I most likely had an infection.

I returned to the birthing unit as advised. When I meet with an OB I was told that I would need bloods but wouldn't be given any pain relief unless I agreed to be admitted back to the maternity ward. I now know I have PTSD from my treatment at the hospital and I was so scared to be put back on the ward where I was treated so badly.

The same OB that called me fat was on shift when I was moved back to the maternity ward. I requested pain relief and he was sent to see me about the pain. He performed an extremely painful physical examination while I screamed in pain and begged him to stop. It got to the point where a midwife said "you have made your point now stop" he said that I didn't need any pain relief. I was a junkie and only came back in to the hospital for pain relief. The midwife requested a senior OB come and see me and she ordered a CT scan, the scan showed a haematoma. My bloods also showed an infection. I was put on IV antibiotics and told I would be there for the week. I was told that since my son technically wasn't a patient and instead a border that the nurses couldn't help care for him. Due to my pain and inability to even care for myself I made the heartbreaking decision to leave him at home with his dad during this stay. Again, being separated from my baby. I hadn't even had a chance to bond with my son before I was sent back to the hospital.

The OB that performed the c section came to see me the following morning to apologise for not giving me antibiotics from the get go as my c section was so complicated and required a "dissolvable" mesh to be put in.

I also requested she prescribe me the medication to dry up my milk as my son was being exclusively formula feed due to the fact we were separated. She said that was fine and she would chart it for me and the nurse on the night shift could give it to me before bed.

When the time came and I was ready to go to sleep I asked the nurse to give me the medication to dry up my milk. She refused. She told me that in the UK (where she was from) they only gave this medication to bereaved mothers as it had very dangerous side effects including death. She told me she didn't feel comfortable giving it to me and I would need to talk to the doctor again in the morning.

The next morning I spoke with the OB who prescribed the medication and she was shocked when I told her what I had been told the night before. She told me that physically I was no different to a bereaved mother and it was perfectly safe for me to have. She offered to have the pharmacist come and speak to me if I was still worried. I trusted what she said so I didn't request to speak with the pharmacist.

Again that night with the same nurse I requested the medication again and was again refused and was instead told that when I was discharged I could take it at home. So for the next 5 days I continued to leak and suffer from more pain as I couldn't have the medication till I went home. When I did eventually get discharged it took me 3 weeks to take the medication as I was scared of what the nurse had said. Regardless of what the doctor has said I had been brainwashed by the nurse to believe I would die.

My son is 2 next month and I have so far had 2 surgeries to try and find the cause of the pain I still suffer from. My pain has never gone away since I woke up from my c section. I am still an outpatient gynaecology patient as they are still trying to find the cause of my pain and persistent bleeding.

I'll never ever forget my pregnancy and birth experience. What was meant to be the happiest time of my life turned out to be the most horrific experience I've ever been through and continue to go through. I was separated from my baby from the minute he was born. I will never ever get that time back. Neither will he, he never got that skin to skin contact or the chance to be breastfeed. Birth trauma is robbing us of so so many things and that needs to change.

1 in 3 women experience birth trauma, read that again, 1 IN 3!!! That is a staggering amount of birthing people who are robbed of the happiest moments of their lives. We need to work harder to support women during pregnancy and birth. We need to believe women when they say they are in pain. We need better nursing numbers so there is enough staff to give each woman the support they need and also deserve. We need this to stop! Please read every single submission and put yourself in the shoes of these women, and their families because birth trauma doesn't only affect the mother, it has a ripple effect through the whole family..